

Adhiṣṭhāna

The Sanskrit term **adhiṣṭhāna**

(Sanskrit: अधिष्ठान; Tibetan: དུཀ་

རྒྱལ་པོ་, THL: *jinlap*; Japanese: 加

持 *kaji*; Thai: อธิษฐาน *àtittǎan*) is

the name for initiations or

blessings in Vajrayana

Buddhism. The term has

various meanings, including the

raised base on which a temple
stands.

Nomenclature, orthography and etymology

Adhiṣṭhāna(m) is a term with multiple meanings: seat; basis; substratum; ground; support; and abode.^[1] The Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary Online holds the

following semantic field for
adhiṣṭhāna:

1. [noun] standing by, being at
hand, approach
2. standing or resting upon
3. a basis, base
4. the standing-place of the
warrior upon the car
5. a position, site, residence,
abode, seat
6. a settlement, town,
standing over

7. government, authority,
power

8. a precedent, rule

9. a benediction (Buddhism)^[2]

Francesca Fremantle gives an
etymology of Sanskrit

adhiṣṭhāna and Tibetan *jinlap*:

"The Sanskrit word literally
means "standing over" and
conveys ideas of taking
possession, dwelling within,
presence, protection, and

sovereignty. The Tibetan literally means "an engulfing wave or flood of splendor and power."^[3]

Dan Martin opines that the Chinese term for adhiṣṭhāna influenced the Tibetan:

Byin-rlabs is commonly glossed as 'gift wave', but it more properly goes back to a literal

translation of a Chinese word which was almost certainly made during the earliest introduction of Buddhism into Tibet in the seventh or eighth centuries. It is not a literal translation of the Sanskrit Buddhists term adhisthana. Its actual, or rather its

*philologically correct,
meaning is 'received by
(way of) giving'.^[4]*

Vajrayana

Tibetan Buddhism

Tsultrim Allione points out that in Tibetan Buddhism adhistana blessings are an important part of the pointing-out instruction received from the guru and lineage.^[5] Receiving these

blessings is dependent on the student having proper motivation, aspiration and intentionality (bodhicitta) and sufficient "devotion" (Sanskrit: bhakti). These blessings may be received from the student's guru during initiation, from the yidam during deity_yoga, or simply from being in the presence of holy objects such as a stupa or the śarīra, "relics", kept inside them. These objects

are held to emanate or incite *adhiṣṭhāna* "blessings, grace" within the mindstream and experience of those connected to them.^[6]

Stream of blessings

In the Indo-Himalayan lineages of Vajrayana, where traditions of Tantra were introduced in the first wave of translations of Sanskrit texts into Old Tibetan from the 8th century onwards,

the term chosen by the community of lotsawa "translators", which importantly is one of the most concerted translation efforts in documented history, chose to render adhiṣṭhāna as Tibetan: འཇིག་རྒྱལ་པ་, THL: *jinlap*. This metaphorical usage of "stream, wave, thread, continuum" is reinforced in philosophy with the mindstream doctrine and its relationship to tantric

sādhanā, where it is used in visualizations and invocations, particularly in relation to the Three Vajras of Padmasambhava and depicted in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist and Bon iconography such as representations of the Adi-Buddha and Tapihritsa. Martin Mills, in a modern political and power-relations dissection of *jinlap* in relation to hierarchical structures of the Gelug, a

Sarma (second-wave) school,
holds that:

The acceptance of offerings by worldly deities and spirits was felt very strongly to oblige the recipient to act in favour of the donor, and particularly to act as their protector (strungma), a term

*widely used by
householders to
describe the various
numina that inhabited
their houses. This
protection was seen as
being a blessing
(chinlabs) which
descended upon the
offerer from above in
the manner of a stream.
This metaphor of the*

stream and its pure source is an important one, and is a central idiom by which hierarchical relations, either in hospitality gatherings, offering practices, or religious teachings, were conceived and spoken about, emphasising once again the salience

*of height as designating
relations with social
superiors and
preceptors.*^[7]

An example of this sādhanā is described in *The Prayer of Inspiration* known as "*The Falling Rain of Blessings*" (gsol 'debs byin rlabs char 'bebs) (from the Yang Zab Nyingpo).^[8]

Shingon Buddhism

In Shingon Buddhism, an extant non-Himalayan school of Vajrayana, practices involving mantras, mudras, and visualisation exercises aim at achieving honzon *kaji* or union with the deity. According to Shingon priest Eijun Eidson:

Honzon simply refers to the main deity in any

given ritual. Kaji refers to the enhancement of a sentient being's power through the Buddha's power (Nyorai-kaji-riki), and it translates the Sanskrit word adhithana.^[9]

Minoru Kiyota identifies three kinds of adhiṣṭhāna in the

theory and practice of Shingon Buddhism:

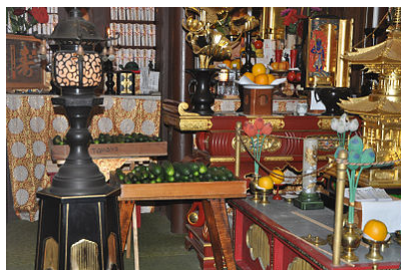
1. mudra, the finger sign
2. dhāraṇī, secret verses
3. yoga, through meditation practices.^[10]

The term *adhiṣṭhāna* is also used to describe the transformative power of the Buddha. According to D. T. Suzuki:

*The Buddha is creative
life itself, he creates
himself in innumerable
forms with all the
means native to him.
This is called his
adhithana, as it were,
emanating from his
personality. The idea of
adhiṣṭhāna is one of the
Mahayana landmarks
in the history of Indian*

Buddhism and it is at the same time the beginning of the 'other-power' (tariki in Japanese) school as distinguished from the 'self-power' (jiriki).^[11]

Cucumber blessing



Cucumbers being blessed
at a Shingon Buddhist
temple in Kailua, Hawaii
County, Hawaii.

The cucumber blessing
(Japanese: きゅうり加持) is an
adhiṣṭhāna practised at
Shingon Buddhist temples in
summer. In a cucumber
blessing meeting, the priest and
believers together pray that
they can pass the season of hot
summer in good health like
fresh cucumbers.^[12] Kūkai, the
founder of Shingon Buddhism,
is said to have initiated this
practice of blessing.

See also

- Shaktipat

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2. Monier Williams Sanskrit-

English Dictionary Online (April, 2009). 'adhiShThAna'. Source: [1] (<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/indexcaller.php>) (accessed: Sunday January 3, 2009) NB: change input to ltrans and place "adhiShThAna" (अधिष्ठान) as cited.

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4. *Martin, Dan (1994). 'Pearls from Bones: Relics, Chortens, Tertons and the Signs of Saintly Death in Tibet'. Numen, Vol. 41, No. 3. (Sep., 1994), p.274.*
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8. Source: *"The Texts of the Yang Nying Pudri Cycle - Rigpa Wiki"* (https://web.archive.org/web/20101010125415/http://rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=The_Texts_of_the_Yang_Nying_Pudri_Cycle) . Archived from the original (http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title%3DThe_Texts_of_the_Yang_Nying_Pudri_Cycle) on 2010-10-10. Retrieved 2009-01-02. (accessed: Sunday January 3, 2010)

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www.nembutsu.info. Journal of Shin Buddhism.*
12. *Cucumber blessing at Shinkoin Temple, Kyoto (<http://hp1.cyberstation.ne.jp/kyoto/jinkouin7.html>) (in Japanese)*

External links

- [Kaji \(http://www.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2004/spring/dharma_dictionary.htm\)](http://www.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2004/spring/dharma_dictionary.htm).

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